

FISH 290: Scientific Writing and Communication (Autumn 2016)



Instructor

Dr. Rachel Hovel, post-doctoral researcher, School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences

How to reach me

Office: Fishery Sciences Building (FSH) 344B

Office phone: 206-616-5761

Email: rhovel@uw.edu (this is the best option for contacting me)

Scheduling meetings and getting help

Office hours: I will be available for drop-in consultation after class on Mondays and Wednesdays until 1 PM, unless otherwise noted. I am also very happy to make individual appointments if some other time works better for you-- please talk to me in class or email to schedule a time.

Course Schedule and Location

Autumn Quarter 2016: Mondays & Wednesdays 9:00-10:20 AM, September 28 - December 9. There will be no in-class final.

Classes will be held in the first floor SAFS computing lab (FSH 136). On days when computers aren't necessary, we'll likely relocate to somewhere more conducive to group conversation. Any changes in venue will be announced by 6 PM the evening before class via email or the [Announcements](#) page (please check this page frequently).

Recommended Textbooks

We will be using readings from two recommended texts to accompany the material discussed in class. These books will serve as good resources for you both during the class while you're working on your assignments, and as a reference for your future work. I do encourage you to purchase and spend some time with both books, which are available at the UW Bookstore:

McMillan, V.E. 2012. Writing Papers in the Biological Sciences. 5th Edition. Bedford/St. Martin's Press, Boston.

Karban, R., M. Huntzinger and I. Pearse. 2014. How To Do Ecology: A Concise Handbook. Second Edition. Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press.

Course Goals

This class is designed to teach undergraduate science students in the School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences and elsewhere to:

- 1 Conceive and refine scientific questions that are appropriate in scope
- 2 Critically read scientific writing
- 3 Access electronic sources of information and publicly available data, including but not limited to internet searches, library databases, and public information and data
- 4 Learn the structure and functions of different components of scientific papers, to effectively communicate scientific findings
- 5 Learn techniques for effective communication of scientific information in oral and poster presentations
- 6 Understand the ethical boundaries associated with scientific communication

Format

The class will emphasize fundamental principles of communication, presented in lecture format, and reinforced by:

- 1 Examination of writing published by professionals
- 2 In-class editing of “mock” examples of papers
- 3 In-class discussions and assignments
- 4 Completion of an original paper based on a scientific question developed by each student
- 5 An oral presentation delivered to the class
- 6 A poster or "new media" presentation

Structure

The class is built around two parallel assignments, both based on a scientific study chosen by each student. One will be the selection and careful examination of a paper published in a professional journal, and the other will be an original research project designed by the student. There will also be smaller hand-on exercises in class and as homework assignments, to familiarize students with technology and gain practice in writing and editing.

Grading

The grades for this class will be determined largely on the basis of four major projects: a review of a published paper, an original written paper, an oral presentation, and a poster. The papers and oral presentations will be based on simple but sound questions posed by each student, refined into a testable hypothesis, and then pursued with appropriate collection of data. The study will be described in a paper in scientific format, and in an oral presentation to the class at a mini-symposium at the end of the course. In addition to this project, each student will select paper published in a scientific journal that will be dissected and examined closely throughout the course, and presented to the class at the end of the course as a poster, in the same way that one might present research at a scientific meeting. These four assignments will constitute the majority of the grade for the course but there will be numerous small

assignments (given in class) for which completion and participation will be expected (and graded). The expected grading breakdown is as follows. However, I reserve the right to change the relative weights depending on how the various topics are emphasized throughout the quarter.

Assignment	Grade %
Paper	30%
Presentation	20%
Poster	20%
Assignments	20%
Attendance/Participation	10%
Total	100%

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism, cheating, and other misconduct are serious violations of your contract as a student. I expect that you will know and follow the University's policies on cheating and plagiarism. Any suspected cases of academic misconduct will be handled according to University regulations. More information can be found at:

<http://depts.washington.edu/grading/issue1/honesty.htm>. Be advised that as an instructor at the UW *I have the responsibility* to notify University Conduct committees about *any* suspected student misconduct. By far the most prominent form of cheating at UW is plagiarism. We will discuss issues of plagiarism in class, including how to avoid it, but it is ultimately *your responsibility* to make sure you are clear on what does and does not constitute plagiarism.

Typical plagiarism “oversights” are:

- 1 Copying an assignment from a friend with whom you study, OR working so closely with this friend that both your assignments LOOK copied (same words and ideas in the same order).
- 2 Copying whole sentences from a web site without restating in student’s words or without quotation/citation. Note that liberal use of quotations will help you to avoid plagiarism but will not help you to receive a good grade in this course.
- 3 Paraphrasing ideas of another author without attempting to write an original sentence.

Late Assignments and Re-grade Policy

As a matter of policy, late assignments **will not be accepted** unless you have notified the instructor (me) well in advance or the circumstances are beyond your control. I have full discretion over whether to accept a late assignment. If you feel an assignment has been graded inappropriately, submit to me via email a brief description of why you feel the grade does not accurately reflect the quality of the work along with the graded assignment. Grade appeals must be submitted within one week of receiving the graded assignment.

Email and Computer Use

All students are expected to have a working email address and you will receive email relevant to this course on a regular basis. Students are also expected to regularly check the UW Canvas site for announcements and updates relevant to the course. Writing assignments must be turned as either a Microsoft Word document (.doc or .docx) or as a .pdf. In-class writing assignments will happen in the SAFS computer lab, so you are not required to bring a laptop. However, you may choose to bring one if you like.

Disability Accommodations

To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disabled Student Services, 448 Schmitz, (206)543-8924 (V/TTY). If you have a letter from Disabled Student Services indicating that you have a disability that requires academic accommodations, please present the letter to the instructor so we can discuss the accommodations needed for this class.